



# My School ! Idaho Charter School Link

The Idaho Charter School Network recently received national recognition for its *Accountability Plan for Idaho's Charter Schools*.

The process was developed in 2001-2002 under the leadership of Kerri Pickett-Hoffman in collaboration with Jim Griffin from the Colorado League of Charter Schools and an ICN Accountability Committee.

While all Idaho charter schools are required by law to complete a programmatic audit, participation in the more comprehensive ICSN Accountability Plan process is voluntary.

Often schools that have chosen to participate are well-established charter schools looking to fine-tune their processes through an external review; or they are schools that are in their

first years of operation seeking recommendations for long range planning.

Charter schools participating in the ICSN Accountability Plan complete a self-study looking at four areas of excellence:

- 1) governance and administration;
- 2) quality of academic program;
- 3) stakeholder satisfaction, involvement and support;
- 4) continuous school improvement plans.

A team of validators, volunteers from charter schools around the state, review the self-study and related documentation. They conduct interviews and observations related to four areas of excellence. The team then prepares a report of its findings, including commenda-

tions, as well as recommendations for future school planning.

Both the State Department of Education and the Charter Commission staff recommend the ICSN program as a comprehensive process for completing a programmatic audit.

To schedule a programmatic audit through the ICSN or for more information see the accountability plan overview which describes the objectives and steps in implementing the ICSN accountability plan (<http://csi.boisestate.edu/ICSNprojects>).



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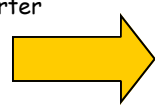
## Charter School Leadership Council Dates

The Charter School Leadership Council was established to collaborate with charter school leaders and leaders of statewide organizations to promote growth and quality among Idaho's charter schools. Charter School Leadership Council meetings

are scheduled throughout the school year to ensure that the statewide action plan meets the ongoing needs of charter schools throughout the state and to keep charter leaders abreast of new opportunities and directions.

October's regional meetings included overviews of:

- 1) *Leadership for Education Entrepreneurs*;
- 2) Statewide charter school development;
- 3) The SDE charter school website;



### Charter School Leadership Council

- Nov. 7, 8, 9  
Conference Call
- Dec. 12, 13, 14  
Conference Call
- January (TBA)  
Charter Summit
- Feb. 13, 14, 15  
Conference Call
- March 12, 13, 14  
Conference Call
- April 9  
Regional Meeting  
Southwestern Idaho
- April 10  
Regional Meeting  
Northern Idaho
- April 11  
Regional Meeting  
Southeastern Idaho
- May 14, 15, 16  
Conference Call
- June (TBA)  
Statewide Meeting

## Idaho Charter Schools in the News: Pocatello Community Charter and Liberty Charter

### Pocatello Community Charter School Hosts US Educators:

Pocatello Community Charter School is a member of the Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound network which emphasizes active learning, literacy, character growth and teamwork. About 140 schools (both charter and non-charter) nationwide use the model.

Each year a handful of ELOB schools are selected to host site visits for educators from other states. Schools that are selected have demonstrated success with implementing the ELOB model. The goal is to provide an op-

portunity for educators to see the Expeditionary Learning Model in action.

Pocatello Community Charter School, chartered in 1999, serves 180 students K-8. "As an Expeditionary Learning school, we teach reading, writing, science, math, and social studies through a challenging set of connected, real-world projects called learning expeditions. Expeditions call upon both students and teachers to collaborate, revise our work through multiple drafts, achieve our personal best, and reflect upon what we have learned."

### Liberty Charter School Recognized as One of 2007 Distinguished Schools:

The State Board of Education recognized seven schools statewide as recipients of the "Distinguished School" award. Liberty Charter School was recognized as one of seven schools that: 1) met AYP for 2 years; 2) fell in the top 5% of schools who make AYP and 3) showed significant reduction in gap areas. "These schools represent the best of the best," said Board President Milford Terrell, "We are very proud of what these schools have done. They are leaders and it shows."

## Recommended Reading: *Educational Entrepreneurship: Realities, Challenges, Possibilities*

*Educational Entrepreneurship: Realities, Challenges, Possibilities*, edited by Frederick M. Hess and published by Harvard Education Press, is an insightful book that offers a window into how educational entrepreneurship has evolved, the hurdles it faces, and its growing impact on our nation's schools.

Technology, medicine and other fields are increasingly based on constantly evolving cycles of improved knowledge. There has been a major transformation

away from slow, incremental progress, toward fast-paced, dynamic change. Entrepreneurs in other fields are important vehicles for change and are agents of continuous improvement.

Educational entrepreneurship has emerged in recent years as an unprecedented and influential force in U.S. K-12 education. This book addresses a number of central questions: What is educational entrepreneurship and what does it look like? Who are the educational

entrepreneurs and what motivates them? What tools do entrepreneurs need to be successful? What policies or practices enable or impede entrepreneurship? What would it mean to open up the education sector to more entrepreneurial activity?

Demands of our post-industrial economy and pressures for innovative approaches, as well as changing perceptions regarding serving diverse student

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## An Innovative, Interdisciplinary Master's Program: ASU's Leadership for Educational Entrepreneurs

Funded initially through a grant from the United States Department of Education, Arizona State's Leadership for Educational Entrepreneurs (LEE) Program is an innovative, interdisciplinary Master's program designed for working professionals in the charter school industry.

The LEE program is an interdisciplinary masters program that bridges the Col-

lege of Teacher Education and Leadership M.Ed. And the School of Global Management and Leadership business degree.

LEE's mission is to promote the development of educational entrepreneurs—leaders who will positively impact student learning, maintain financial responsibilities and thrive in a market-based system. The LEE program provides

technical and leadership training and a support network for educational entrepreneurs to become change agents with strong business, education and research skills

LEE courses are delivered face-to-face at Arizona State University's West campus, on-line, and at regional sites across the country. For more information see [www.west.asu.edu/LEE](http://www.west.asu.edu/LEE).

## National Charter School News Connection: Myths about the Financial Impact of Public Charter Schools

An issue brief published in July 2007 by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools entitled *The Bottom Line: Six Myths about the Financial Impact of Public Charter Schools* explores the impact of charters, not only on school districts, but on the broader community.

Authors Mathew Arkin and Bryan C. Hassel of Public Impact argue that charter schools do not "drain money from the public schools" because they are, in fact, public schools duly authorized under state law. Instead funds are being moved from one provider of public education to another.

Debates about charter schools' fiscal

impact almost always centers on the budget of local school districts. Arkin and Hassel suggest that a short-term focus on district budgets often leads to misconceptions. They suggest that districts develop a holistic, multi-year process to better understand the financial impact of charter schools and to prepare to take advantage of opportunities for change that charters provide. In Idaho, some charter schools contract with local districts for transportation, food service or student services.

Charter schools can bring new resources to a community through federal charter school support grants, foundation grants and venture capital. Through the Charter

Schools Program, the U.S. Department of Education provides grants to charter schools for planning, development and implementation—funding that would not come to a community's public schools without charter schools. Since Idaho's Public Charter School law passed in 1998, Idaho's public charter schools have received from more than \$15 million in federal funds.

Finally they observe that a high-performing charter schools are good financial and academic investments for a community: "While high-performing district schools are also sound investments, financial analysts show that charters can often provide "more bang for the buck."

## Replicating the DNA of Successful Charter Schools

The National Charter School Research Project published a research brief in May 2007 that explored the challenges of identifying and replicating successful schools. Robin Lake observes that "even in the business world where replicating best practices is arguably a more straightforward process, the majority of such efforts fail."

Major foundations; for example, the Gates, Walton and Pisces Foundations are increasingly offering replication grants to help successful school expand the number of schools following their model. However, a comprehensive analysis of barriers to effective charter school replication efforts noted that organizations encounter problems ensuring the model school is replicated faithfully.

Lake cites research from business replication efforts: "There are only two choices in building a new organization: Leveraging knowledge or innovating. You can't have both. Leveraging knowledge through replication should be done with humility and respect for the care that

went into creating the original successful enterprise." Gabriel Szulanski and Sidney Winter, authors of *Get it Right*, offer these lessons for successful business replication:

- 1) Make sure you are trying to replicate something that can be copied and is worth copying.
- 2) Observe the original model directly.
- 3) Copy the original model as closely as you can.
- 4) Adapt only after achieving acceptable results.
- 5) Keep the template in mind, even as you adapt.

Based on these lessons, Lake suggests that those trying to replicate successful schools should:

- Insist on third-party evaluations and test-score analysis before investing in replicating what appears to be a success story for students enrolled.
- Consider pairing founders with outside observers to identify successful practices.

- Outline the expected level of fidelity to the original model in a school's charter, contract or memorandum of understanding, but allow flexibility for tinkering where appropriate.
- Emphasize the point that innovation should never be for the sake of innovation alone, but only to improve on what others have failed to achieve. In that way, the right to innovate should be earned and justified on the basis of better student outcomes.
- At least initially, insist that charter replication efforts involve hard-nosed critiques and object analyses to identify whether and how a replica school has strayed from the original model.

Lake observes that if we are going to be successful in meeting the demands from parents for successful schools, it will be necessary to find ways to leverage existing knowledge and not just rely on school-by-school innovations

## Idaho State Dept of Education

Shirley A. Rau  
School Choice Coordinator  
208-332-6963  
sarau@sde.idaho.gov

Lori Howard  
Administrative Assistant  
208-332-6902  
lahoward@sde.idaho.gov

P.O. Box 83720  
650 West State Street  
Boise, Idaho 83702  
Fax: 208-334-2228

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populations have prompted a need for change.

Educational entrepreneurs are playing an increasingly visible role in shaping the future of education in America. They are visionary thinkers, mavericks and institution builders. They create organizations to make the changes they want to see in the world—and by doing so, inspire others to follow. Education entrepreneurs possess learned optimism, seeing setbacks as external and temporary hurdles that can be overcome with hard work.

Entrepreneurs catalyze change. They provide a venue for new skills and mindsets regarding education. They develop learning laboratories. They are open to breaking the rules where necessary to create better solutions.

In order to be successful, educational entrepreneurs need three kinds of support: financial capital, human capital and intellectual capital. New venture schools need to seek startup capital through foundations, individual donors and venture philanthropy. As schools mature, they need to explore options for locating growth and sustaining capital.

Authors note that new venture schools benefit from:

- An entrepreneurial executive experienced in starting and scaling up new education organizations;
- A hybrid planning team with skills across the business, nonprofit and public sectors; a strong venture building board, rather than a "friends and family" board.

In addition they can benefit from intellectual capital provided by con-

sulting firms, outside evaluators and policy makers who inform growth strategies, evaluate, research and disseminate.

Authors outline 5 principles of an entrepreneurial school:

1. Responsive to Changes—the needs of students, families and communities;
2. Customer-Oriented—focused first and foremost on the needs of students;
3. Performance-Driven—assessment and adjustment of goals and resources are based on measured progress;
4. Constantly Learning—as soon as one level of performance is achieved, the next target becomes clear;
5. Culture of meritocracy—use success to inform practice and reward for efforts.

There has been a trend toward social entrepreneurs—individuals focused on making a difference for students in communities that are underserved. They have a desire to not only create something better for their time—but to mold the world to a better place.

## Charter Start! 101: From Vision to Implementation

In September, 40 charter petitioners from across the state met at the Red Lion Riverside in Boise for an introduction to the process of designing and implementing a public charter school.

Teams of individuals, representing 15 different schools explored issues related to developing a high-quality educational program, as well as an effectively run non-profit business.

Participants were provided with an overview of charter school development in the state and in the nation. They were introduced to federal and state laws regulating Idaho public charter schools. Tamara Baysinger of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission outlined the charter development process. Kim Fanter of the

Idaho Charter School Network helped participants to develop vision and mission statements that articulated the spirit and uniqueness of each school.

Morning sessions focused on the educational program. Misty Knuchell, Val Schorzman, Fernanda Brendefer and Marcia Beckman from the State Department discussed special student populations. Suzanne Greg from Anser Charter School, outlined a systems approach to education program design. Tamara Baysinger presented best practices for developing measurable goals.

A working lunch session by Greg Berg and Julie Oberle from the SDE provided an introduction to school finance and budget. Afternoon ses-

sions focused on school operations and included governance presentations by Tamara Baysinger and Renee Sessler of the Idaho School Boards Association and Susanne Burton from Anser, as well as presentations by SDE staff—Lanette Daw, Transportation Specialist, Matt McCarter, Safe and Drug Free Schools Coordinator, Mary Jo Marshall, School Lunch Coordinator and Christina Linder Director of Certification.

The workshop is the first in a series of workshops designed to support charter developers as they negotiate the petitioning process in Idaho. The SDE is partnering with the Idaho Charter School Network to present follow-up workshops for developers.